

FREMONT BOARD OF SELECTMEN**29 DECEMBER 2005****APPROVED 01/05/2006**

At 6:10 pm the meeting was called to order by Chairman Cordes. Present were Selectmen Gene Cordes, Peter Bolduc, and Donald Gates Jr; and Town Administrator Heidi Carlson

Selectmen read through the agenda. There was some discussion about the special election to be held for Rockingham District 9.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Selectmen reviewed minutes for 12/20/05. A motion was made to approve these minutes by Bolduc and seconded by Gates. The vote was unanimously approved 3-0.
2. The State special election for Representative, Rockingham District 9 is slated for a primary on February 7, 2006 and general election to be combined with all town and school district voting issues on Tuesday March 14, 2006. Candidate sign-up with NH Secretary of State is through January 3, 2006.
3. To follow-up discussion from a few weeks ago, Selectmen will begin to work on a sick and vacation time accrual policy.
4. The fee schedule public hearing is scheduled for January 19, 2006 at 7:30 pm. Notice will go in the January Newsletter as well as be posted.

Neal Janvrin came into the meeting at 6:25 pm.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Selectmen reviewed the payroll manifest \$15,298.63; and accounts payable manifest \$45,054.63. Motion was made to approve them by Bolduc and seconded by Gates. The vote was unanimously approved 3-0.
2. Selectmen signed a lien form for recording on parcel 03-020.
3. Selectmen signed outgoing correspondence to Rick Pinder re: ballfield work; Turner Porter re: Tuck Woods Phase I; Jack Barnes re: non-binding warrant articles.
4. Selectmen noted receipt of a request from Gristmill LLC to accept the first 1,700 feet of Gristmill Road at the 2006 annual meeting. Selectmen questioned whether the engineer and Road Agent have granted satisfactory approvals, and this will be determined shortly.
5. Selectmen began to discuss the budget transfers and encumbered items. The Board decided to address a list of all items at once, upon completion of the budget year. The only item to be encumbered at this point is the residual of the revaluation monies. A listing of line item transfers will be prepared once they are all completed.

Department Heads

Chief Janvrin said that he had approximately \$6,800 remaining between the police department budget (\$3,581) and Animal Control budget (\$3,231). He said that they have identified a problem with the Animal Control vehicle in that there is not a radio and light system in the truck. There are places in town that the portables do not work, and he feels that a radio is necessary in the vehicle.

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He said that the ACO truck is a limited use vehicle, but if another radio goes down, they could use the ACO truck as a backup. They could also use the light package as a backup as well. The radio quote is \$3,745 and the light system quote is \$974.

Selectmen discussed the budget impact of this, as well as the uses for the vehicle. This led to discussion about use of cell phones and pagers as well.

Gates moved to approve the line item transfer to upgrade the radio system and install lights in the Animal Control truck. Bolduc seconded and the vote was unanimously approved 3-0. This included transfer of approximately \$1,500 from the Police Department budget to the ACO budget. The balance of the unexpended monies will be returned to the general fund as Janvrin said his bills were paid for 2005.

Janvrin said that Guerwood Holmes had mentioned the fact recently, that the Police Department could not weigh trucks. Janvrin discussed with the Board the option of making some arrangement with Seacoast Farms about using their scales when the Police felt it was necessary. The Seacoast Farms scales are certified. Selectmen said that this would have no bearing on the Town's oversight of his business, and Janvrin said that he would have that discussion with Mr Kelly.

Jason Grant starts the full-time police academy on January 9, 2006 for twelve weeks.

Janvrin said that he needs to have the department's training records returned (from the personnel binders) to be used for year end reports. Gates said that he felt the training portion of the record was not a direct part of the personnel file; and that this could be maintained at the Police Department. It was suggested that annually an updated summary page be submitted for the personnel file for each officer. Janvrin said he would get the training records next week.

There was follow-up discussion regarding the Police Department's proposal to purchase a new SUV in a warrant article. Selectmen asked if it is a limited use vehicle (used in severe weather and to tow the ATV trailer), could the Police Department consider instead purchasing a used vehicle? Selectmen indicated that equipping the vehicle is the same if it is new or used. Janvrin said that he went to Glen's Auto and Glen said it will cost more used than it would new at State bid price because the used ones he would get are the luxury models with all of the luxury improvements. In response to another questions, Janvrin stated that the Ford Expedition does not come in a diesel.

Gates explained that the Budget Committee wants to see the vehicle in the cruiser rotation cycle, which Janvrin disagrees with. Selectmen said they had talked about a used vehicle with 50,000 miles on it for \$5,000 or so, to be used similar to how the blazer was (used and originally purchased).

Janvrin said that an older vehicle will not meet the CAR 54 criteria. The radio in the blazer is the only item that can be moved to a newer vehicle. With a new vehicle, the CAR 54 package can be put in at no cost (Janvrin estimated this at \$14,000).

Janvrin said that he is counting on the CAR 54 project next year to replace two laptops that are down, and have not been replaced/repared.

Janvrin said that within two years, he will be looking for two cars on patrol at times.

Janvrin said the Expedition has a towing capacity they are looking for, and will tow the 14 foot trailer with no problem. Janvrin was not sure what the capacity need was to tow the OHRV trailer.

Chief Janvrin left the meeting at 7:25 pm.

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At 7:30 pm Kyle Murdock met with the Selectmen. There was discussion about the outstanding items on the table.

With regard to an updated copy of LOSAP program, Murdock explained that the only change was in the dollar value of the aware. It is now \$500 to first responders and \$1,000 to EMT's. (Prior to 2006 those were at \$1,000 for first responders and \$1,500 for EMT's). Every year that they have had the plan, there are some concerns expressed by the Budget Committee. The group decided that it is important to have the plan, and is not worth losing. He said members continually indicated it "is not about the money," and decided to put that into their policy and get behind their words.

There was discussion about the Points Plan and LOSAP and their utilization. It was discussed in general about taking some of the money being removed from LOSAP (flat fee of say \$2,000) and adding it to the Points Plan. It is still a capped plan, and there would be no change to the taxpayer. (For 2006, LOSAP initially proposed as a reduction).

Murdock will go back to the membership with some of these ideas (the next Rescue meeting is January 10th). He will get back to the Board after that meeting.

Cordes said that they had hoped to have Brett Hunter here (but he is unavailable, traveling) as he had expressed some concerns about the points plan administration, particularly how often and how points are tallied and reported back to members. Murdock said that the reporting is supposed to be done every month, and that it had not been done that way in 2005 and he took responsibility for it, due to his lack of time. He said he gave that up a few months ago, and that is why Lisa Maffei is now the plan administrator. He said he feels it will be done better this year. Murdock said Hunter may not have been aware that Maffei has taken over as the point plan administrator.

With regard to departmental leadership and how it is organized, the Selectmen reiterated that they feel that rescue is a town department. Murdock said he agrees with that. Murdock said that he has talked to the rescue membership here and there (there has not been a meeting since his last discussion with the Selectmen). He said the few he has talked to, expressed concerns over why this would be done, and what is trying to be changed? Murdock said that he explained it as it had been explained to him; and that the Selectmen had certain responsibilities and some of the processes need to be formalized in accordance with Town policy and practice. Murdock said the members he spoke with understood this information.

Murdock said he only talked to about four people, and there was concern expressed about this leading to the two departments to be combined; and what it changes, and what would be the process for it happening.

As it stands today, there are two separate departments, and for now it would mean acknowledging where the rescue squad lies, and there are some employees on the squad that the Board of Selectmen has not been involved in the hiring of; and that the Selectmen are looking to be responsible for what is their job, in this instance, what is outlined in the background check/hiring policy for the safety services.

There was discussion about how the leadership of the rescue squad would be chosen. Selectmen suggested that the squad discuss this on January 10th at their meeting, and also said that Selectmen (one or all) could attend if the group wanted. From there, perhaps another meeting will be held with Selectmen and rescue squad members.

Cordes said that with regard to the Study Committee, the Selectmen are still being asked about their position on the two departments being combined. Cordes asked if there was any merit to the rumor that had been circulating about another study being done. Murdock said that there were definitely people

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interested in looking at other options, and stressed that the minutes from the study committee contained some information that was incorrect. Murdock said that he did not believe any further action had been taken by rescue squad members with regard to a follow-up informational study.

He said that the initial study committee did not talk to any medical-only departments, and Murdock feels that is important to do to get the whole story and make a comparison to Fremont rescue. He said there is still concern on behalf of the rescue that the Selectmen have not heard from the rescue squad members in this regard.

Selectmen thought that a legitimate concern was how individuals would work together given their history and prior working relationships.

Murdock said that he felt there was a large difference between fire and medical. In the long run, there will be an ambulance in Fremont, and billing for ambulance transports.

At 8:15 pm motion was made by Bolduc and seconded by Gates to enter non-public session pursuant to NH RSA 91-A II 3 (c) to discuss a personnel issue. The vote was unanimously approved 3-0.

At 8:20 pm motion was made by Bolduc and seconded by Gates to return to public session. The vote was unanimously approved 3-0.

No decisions were made.

Murdock will try and get onto a monthly schedule with safety service department heads having a monthly meeting. Selectmen suggested that Chief Heselton work on this schedule as well.

Murdock added that the accident two weeks ago on Route 111A went extremely well by all counts. He said he had spoken with Exeter Hospital, and that all departments worked extremely well together. Selectmen said they should revel in that success.

Murdock left the meeting at 8:35 pm.

At 8:45 pm Lori Holmes met with the Selectmen. She discussed some of the election issues, and the upcoming special election. If there is only one candidate from each party, there is no need to hold a primary. As much information as is currently available, is on the website and will be in the January newsletter.

Holmes met with the Board to further discuss her budget submission for the Town Clerk's office. She said that she had scheduled time with the Board to go over her budget again after getting more information from other towns. She said that she had contacted the other towns personally to get the information in the spreadsheet she presented a few weeks ago.

Selectmen said that they had earlier discussed this issue, and were kicking around the proposed 35% increase in the Clerk's salary. They discussed with her their rationale of supporting a 1/3 increase in salary given that the proposal was for approximately a 1/3 increase in the Clerk's open office hours (from 21 to 28). Holmes asked them to consider the overall change in the work schedule, which is from the current 30 working hours to a proposed 40 working hours per week. This is also a 1/3 increase in overall proposed work time.

Holmes questioned that the Board's rationale was centered on the open hours only, not the administrative work. Holmes said that there could be a week when you might have less than a 40 hour week and that

you would make up for that with added hours in the next week. She said that at year end, she was planning it was 2080 hours worked a year. She described that they had a problem with the State computer system yesterday that required she and the Deputy worked until 6:30 last night due to the problem. She indicated like any salary position, some weeks you will work 30, some 40, and some 50, for example.

She indicated that after the State work, they also have to enter all the bookkeeping records in the town system. She said their work is not only at the counter, it is phone and email inquiries, and citizens, vitals requests, etc.

Gates said the Board was looking at the percentage change in open hours, as a way to gauge it for the increase, and asked what she had used to make her initial submission. Holmes said that she came to her salary request figure by using comparisons with other towns; and used an average of all those towns.

There was discussion about how the Town had gone from fees to a salary. Holmes said the correct way to do that is have all revenues deposited by the Town and then a bill submitted by the Clerk to the Town. Holmes felt that even with a modest base salary, she may make more money with a fee structure versus the current salary-only basis.

There then was a lengthy discussion about Holmes proposing to work 40 hours and whether or not she was asking to be considered full-time and be eligible for the Town's benefit package for full-time employees. She said she had not been planning that when putting it together and did not know much about what the town offered, and was interested to get that information. There was a lengthy discussion about some of the benefits offered to full-time employees as well as the issues surrounding opening that to elected officials. Holmes said she was governed only by the statutes. Selectmen indicated they had no control over her office functions, and that there needed to be some policy decisions made and definition added to cover an elected official with the town's benefits. Carlson suggested this needed to be added to the personnel policy discussion as there were certain things that would not apply to an elected official. It was suggested that if Holmes wanted to be considered as a full-time employee that she would need to follow the same practices and be subject to pertinent employee policies as are other full-time appointed employees. She said she was comfortable doing that, but indicated the statutes governed her job functions solely.

Selectmen said they will need to look at what some of the issues are surrounding elected officials working full-time hours from a personnel administration standpoint. This will need to be looked at in terms of development of the Town's personnel policy.

Holmes said that she wanted to be treated the same as other full-time employees so that she would not be singled out as getting more benefits. She said she did not want and would not take the Town's health insurance because her husband is currently employed full-time by the Town, and she is covered on his plan. This led to discussion about if someone else were to have to take over the Town Clerk role, or personnel changed elsewhere. Selectmen felt if this was to move ahead, all of the benefits would have to be budgeted.

There was a lengthy discussion about the position and hours worked. Selectmen indicated that there is not any question about hours worked or integrity, that the new discussion about benefits was what was a change, now late in the budget process. Holmes said she had not considered it when she earlier met with the Board, but was interested in considering it.

Holmes indicated she did not want the Town's health insurance, but after further discussion it was thought it had to be placed in the budget. Holmes said that her husband was going to stay working for the Town, but it is possible that due to illness or other changes that the possibility would arise the Town

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would have to pay out those benefits. Gates said if budgeted and not spent, it would simply be returned to the general fund.

After further discussion, she indicated she did want dental insurance, and the other benefits offered to full-time employees. She said that she would keep a timesheet and go over it in on a monthly or quarterly basis with the Selectmen if they wanted. She agreed to such administrative items as using the town's timesheet, vacation request form, etc like other full-time employees.

She said that Statutes and Administrative Rules govern all of the Clerk's functions. She also talked about the files that are kept by the State for personnel records. Carlson said it needed to be considered that the position was different from other town employees in that there is not the same reporting structure. Holmes said she is responsible to the taxpayers, and that there are several state agencies and oversight of her and her position.

Holmes indicated in response to a question, that 80% of her work was surrounding motor vehicles.

Holmes asked the Board for a brief synopsis of the situation prior to her leaving the meeting. Cordes summed up by indicating that they had based their earlier discussions for a salary recommendation on the number of open hours because that was a known quantity. Holmes indicated a strong feeling that she put in 40 hours and that it is full-time work. This led to discussion about full-time and benefits and how she has managed her employ and when she needed to be away for sickness or simply time paid leave. Carlson suggested as an interim solution, perhaps the Clerk considering paid leave, sick and holiday time coupled with her salary. Holmes said she felt it was the same as other full-time positions and wanted all of the same benefits aside from the health insurance.

After further discussion she said she is interested in some insurance benefits, including dental, and toward health to lower the cost of what they are paying out of pocket for health insurance.

The Selectmen said the outstanding issue is the amount of the salary and wages to be recommended.

Holmes said that her proposed salary and wage lines were a mixture both of what other towns were doing and based on the increased workload in her office. She said that as a resident and taxpayer that she cares about taxes and her community. She said she was trying to look at everything (as a department head her responsibilities, amount of work, hours worked, averages in other towns) to come up with a figure that was fair.

Gates said the Board was trying to do what they thought was the best for Fremont. Everyone needs to consider what has to be balanced, for taxpayers and employees. Holmes said she had put a lot of thought into her budget and that she felt her position was no more or less important or different than that of the Town Administrator, Building Inspector, Highway laborer, and proposed full-time position for the Planning/Zoning department, just as examples.

With regard to other budget lines, Selectmen had been comfortable with all the line items aside to salary. Holmes then discussed the proposed wage for the Deputy Town Clerk. Holmes said that the Deputy Town Clerk has to be trained and needs to be certified at every level that the Town Clerk does.

With regard to the proposed wage rate for the deputy, Selectmen suggested that in good conscience that it is difficult to treat one town employee different than another. Holmes said that she felt the Deputy position needed to be brought up to a level more comparable to other towns. Holmes' rationale for the increase also included that the deputy had been to several workshops and increased her knowledge base considerably this past year. Holmes said the deputy was also different in that she would need to assume

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all duties of the town clerk in the clerk's absence for any reason. She said that other clerical positions, for instance, in the Selectmen's Office did not have that same responsibility, to assume all duties of the Town Administrator in Carlson's absence.

Holmes said she thought that personnel currently received a step increase annually. Selectmen said this is done for full-time staff and uniformed police officers, based on an annual evaluation. Cordes suggested that the \$12 be budgeted and that the deputy's wage goes up with the cost of living after Town Meeting, and that the additional increase be based on an evaluation and some agreed upon goals for the coming year. These goals might include broadening the scope of her training to add to her skill level, and keep up with any updates throughout the year. Holmes said that trainings are whatever happens to be offered in any given year by the State.

With the lateness of the hour, it was decided that Holmes would wait to hear back from the Board on their recommendation for her salary and the deputy town clerk's wages. Selectmen indicated that they had made positive recommendations on the remainder of the items in her budget based on her request.

Holmes left the meeting at approximately 11:20 pm.

BUDGETS

Carlson again discussed the General Government buildings budget, and questioned the Board on whether or not monies should be added there to fix the water problem at the intersection of Jackie Bernier Drive and Main Street. It is not included in the Highway Department budget, but depending on the scope and nature of work, it is possible it could be covered in summer maintenance. Carlson will talk more with Guerwood Holmes about this tomorrow.

OLD BUSINESS CONTINUED

5. The Fire Department Standards of Conduct and Disciplinary Action policy was reviewed. The Selectmen directed that a copy be given to the Fire Chief, which he had requested yesterday as he does not generally attend the officer's meetings. Selectmen asked for the Chief to review it and check in with them at their meeting next week with his comments and recommendation.

6. The highway department part-time position was discussed. The conditional items in the offer to Michael Holmes have been received back (criminal and MV records checks). The Selectmen wrote a letter to Holmes offering him the position on a permanent basis with conditions that he advise the Board if he should receive a moving violation at any time. The letter was prepared and signed to Holmes. The job description will be forwarded for him to review and accept as well.

7. Selectmen further discussed the Town Clerk's salary and requested budget proposal. After lengthy discussion, Selectmen decided to recommend a salary for the clerk of \$32,700 based on the working hours are one-third more than she is currently being compensated for. With that, they want to see from her a map of the scheduled time in her office of at least 28 hours per week, and the schedule of when she will be in there doing the other administrative tasks to get to the total of 40 hours proposed. The 40 salaried hours are to be done at the Town Offices and timesheet are to be submitted every pay period, signed by the Clerk for the record, with all other employees time records. The Board suggested that a plan for how the clerk will communicate her scheduling of time away from the office (by use of the vacation form as notice ahead) be determined (such as notification and that she makes arrangements with the deputy for sick and vacation, and leaves word with the Selectmen's Office).

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With regard to the package of full-time benefits, Selectmen felt that the policy and procedure needed to be in place prior to making that change-over for an elected official.

Once the personnel policy is finished the clerk would be subject to all the provisions as applicable. At this time, the Board felt comfortable recommending the paid leave of two weeks annually, six sick days, along with paid holidays. The decided not to recommend the remainder of the benefit package until further work had been done on a policy, definitions, and researching how other towns handle similar situations with elected, salaried officials working 40 hours.

NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED

6. The January 2006 Newsletter was reviewed and approved for publication. Lori Holmes had submitted some updates which will be incorporated as well.

NEXT WEEK

The Budget Committee meets at 7:00 pm on Tuesday January 3, 2006

The next regular Board meeting will be held on Thursday January 5, 2006 at 6:00 pm. All Town Offices are closed on Monday January 2, 2006 for the New Years Holiday.

With no further business to come before the Board, motion was made by Gates and seconded by Bolduc to adjourn the meeting at 12:30 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Carlson
Town Administrator